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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE 46th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1950

held at

CONWAY HALL

Red Lion Square, London, W. C. 1.

on

7th, 8th, and 9th April, 1950.

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The General...
CHAIRMAN
VICE-CHAIRMAN
TELLER
REP

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On the first Day
The General Secretary called the Conference to order at 11.20 am.

CHAIRMAN: S. Hampson.
VICE-CHAIRMAN: C. Lestor.
TELLERS: Irvine and Turner.

REPORT OF THE 46th EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

- (1) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS: No action.
(2) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ATTENDANCES: No action.
(3) BRANCHES, MEMBERSHIP and ORGANISATION:

- (a) Branches: No action.
(b) Membership:

Amendment to Rule.

Rule 2. Line 1. Delete '3d' and insert '6d'

Lost 32-54.

Rule 9. Line 2. " '2d' " insert '3d'

Lost 19-62.

- (c) Central Branch: No action.
(d) Report of Central Organiser: No action.
(e) Proportional Representation:

Resolution - Islington (Terry and Mastyn) "That this conference supports the Standing Orders Committee report and that no further action be taken on the question of proportional representation." Carried 51-9.

(f) Low Return of Ballot Papers:

Resolution - Bloomsbury (Lawrence and Devereux) "That this conference recommends that ballot papers be issued from Head Office to all Party members; that they be stamped with pre-paid postage; that before the ballot takes place a notice be inserted in the "S.S." drawing attention to the fact that a ballot is being held; that the ballot papers be printed if possible, and numbered; that a note be included on the ballot paper emphasising the importance of completing and returning it; all suggestions, if adopted, should operate from the election of the 1951 E.C." Carried 62-4.

Discussion. Bloomsbury said that the present method of organising Party ballots appeared very unsatisfactory. Information contained in a recent E.C. report showed that only about one-fifth of the membership returned papers. Despite enquiry it had not been ascertained why this was so; it was a dangerous state of affairs and in order to find out the reason for the low return of ballot papers the only way was to try a new method of organising ballots.

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Leyton thought that the proposed method would eliminate the possibility of branch secretaries omitting to send out the ballot papers to their members.

Lewisham opposed the resolution on the grounds of expense, and that Head Office could not keep an up-to-date record of members' addresses; each branch should recognise its own responsibilities and if branch secretaries could not do the job then branches should appoint a special official. Edware considered that the provision of printed ballot forms would draw more attention to the fact that there was a ballot.

Kingston stated that branch secretaries generally were not at fault; the low return of ballot papers was the result of the lack of knowledge of Party members as to the candidates for posts and this could be prevented by finding some means to give qualifications, experience, etc., of candidates on the voting papers.

Birmingham said that London members were in a position to know more about the candidates for posts but that provincial branches required some information as to their qualifications.

Another Bloomsbury delegate stated that, if the lack of knowledge of the candidates was the reason for the low return of the ballot papers for E.C. elections then this reason could not very well apply to Party Polls e.g. that on membership of the Armed Forces taken in 1949, in which a question of principle was involved and which also showed a low return of papers.

Ealing said that with pre-paid postage members were less likely to forget to post back their completed ballot papers. A Bloomsbury Branch delegate said that from the discussion it seemed that Branch Secretaries had sometimes omitted to distribute papers, or in some cases, to return them to Head Office in time.

The General Secretary thought that the present system was antiquated and very imperfect; we should try to make sure that each member received a ballot paper for which he would be responsible to return; the cost per ballot would be a few pounds; the scheme could operate from H.O. provided the Branches co-operated by supplying current addresses of their members; quite apart from any other reason the proposed method would ensure that each member received a ballot paper.

Bloomsbury wound-up by saying that more evidence was required for the reasons for low returns and that the method proposed was the only way to determine whether it was due to lack of interest and knowledge or because of inadequate organisation in the past.

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Resolution - Fulham (Roseneil and E. Smith.) "That this conference recommends that a summary of each candidate's qualifications be included on all ballot forms." Lost 13-49.

Discussion. Fulham opened by saying that such a system would be a way to find out why many members did not vote. Bloomsbury claimed that it was unnecessary when members worked for the Party, attended meetings etc., their qualifications became common knowledge. Marylebone raised the question of who was to determine what particulars would be included, for example, if E.C. members decided on descriptions of themselves there was great danger of prejudice creeping in. Kingston said that it was not merely personal impressions of the candidates that was required but particulars of committees, etc., on which they had served. Fulham claimed that the information was mainly needed by provincial branches; they should know candidates opinions, views, etc. Paddington said that it was impracticable to give information about members' opinions. In any case members did get information about candidates from E.C. reports, attending conferences, etc. Party voting papers would become election addresses.

Fulham wound-up by saying that it was not personal information that was required but a few simple facts of each candidate's Party experience.

(g) Membership of the Armed Forces.

Resolution - Croydon Branch " That this conference hereby decides that as workers and members of the Party may be forced by economic pressure to join the Armed Forces, such employment should not necessarily prevent such workers from joining the Party, or necessarily prevent members from remaining within the Organisation. All Forms "A" and all cases should receive consideration and should be decided on their merits." Lost 20-63.

Discussion - Croydon claimed that if members are forced to join the Armed Forces through economic circumstances this was not joining voluntarily. As time went on the coercive force of government became more oppressive. Socialists had family obligations etc., such commitments should be taken into consideration; at present, workers in the Armed Forces could apply for membership of the Party, and it seemed that we had one attitude towards applications from those already in the Forces and another towards members who might have to volunteer; no member of the Party would join the Forces voluntarily without being forced to do so

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by pressure of circumstances and we should therefore consider each case on its merits. Palmers Green opposed the resolution by saying that members in the Forces were of little use for the propagating of Socialist ideas and were not under the control of the Party. Marylebone opposed the resolution; they thought it better for members to leave the Party whilst in the Forces for to allow them to remain would hinder our work of propagating Socialism by having to give complicated explanations to critics and opponents.

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| (h) <u>Delegate Meeting Arrangements.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (i) <u>Party Notepaper.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (j) <u>Circulation of E.C. Sub-Committee Reports.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (k) <u>Head Office Library.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |

(4) PROPAGANDA:

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|--|-------------------|
| (a) <u>Outdoor Meetings.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (b) <u>Indoor Meetings.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (c) <u>Debates.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (d) <u>Addresses to other Organisations.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (e) <u>Summary of Propaganda Statistics.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |
| (f) <u>Observations.</u> | <u>No action.</u> |

Resolution - St. Pancras (LaTouche and Goodman) "That this conference views with concern the small number of meetings held in the provinces in relation to the London area, and recommends that the E.C. adopt the following suggestions :-

1. That an attempt be made to find two or more part-time propagandists who are prepared to speak in the Provinces for a period of three months during the 1950 Summer Propaganda Season.
2. That these comrades be paid during their appointment at a rate acceptable to them and the E.C. (Excluding travelling expenses.).
3. That a programme of Propaganda Activity be drawn up by the E.C. and adhered to by the propagandists concerned."

Agreed.

Discussion. St. Pancras said that if the propaganda statistics were studied it would be seen that only 100 meetings had been held in the provinces as compared with 750 in London; provincial branches could not call upon a pool of speakers like London branches; apathy in a branch was due to the lack of propaganda activity, and an increase in such activity would strengthen provincial branches; St. Pancras Branch understood comrades were available and the expense falling on the Party would not be heavy; that provincial propaganda

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should take
Manchester
provincial
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23rd

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should take precedence over parliamentary activity. Manchester said that the important point was that provincial propaganda should take precedence over parliamentary activity; although there were speakers in Manchester they were not available; they wanted some sustained support from London as sending occasional speakers to the provinces for one day only was a wasted effort as the meetings held could not be adequately followed up.

Edgware considered we should be chiefly concerned with supplying provincial branches with speakers during the forthcoming summer propaganda season; full-time propagandists were most suitable, but as urgent need was for immediate help the suggestions would go some way to meet the requirements of the Provincial Branches.

Birmingham supported the resolution stating that instead of supplying so many speakers to places where there were only groups, e.g. Derby, Bristol, etc., it would be better if speakers were sent more to areas where there were already established branches.

Paddington said that we had had provincial propagandist organisers and that we should have them again; this was not, however, a magical solution to the problem of the weakness of provincial branches; the real solution was that more activity and speakers should come from the branches themselves.

St. Pancras wound up by saying that the main object of the resolution was to get some activity started now and to give the E.C. the necessary authority.

Resolution - Kingston "That the present system of selecting and testing prospective new speakers be reviewed with a view to the elimination or amendment of speakers' tests and to the rescission of the ruling which precludes a member from speaking on behalf of the Party until he has passed a speakers' test.

Lost 23-64.

Amendment - St. Pancras "That the words 'or amendment' be deleted.

Lost 7-72.

Resolution - S.W. London "That this Conference instructs the Executive Committee to take the necessary steps to ensure that Party literature can be sold and collections made at all parks and open spaces where Party meetings are held."

Carried 35-32.

(5) LITERATURE:

Resolution - Fulham "That a new 'Socialist Standard' Editorial Committee be set up, comprising about 12 members (at least one of whom shall be a member of the Education

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- Committee) to determine policy, lay-out and content of the 'S.S.' " Lost 12-65.
- Amendment - Manchester and Palmers Green "Delete '12' in line 2 and insert '6'." Lost 25-42.
- Resolution - Fulham "That the Editorial Committee include a sub-committee of 2 or 4 members to select matter for publication in the 'S.S.' " Lost 9-66.
- Resolution - Fulham "That the 'S.S.' include serial articles on subjects which are too large to be adequately covered by single, ordinary-sized articles." Carried 41-15.
- Resolution - Fulham "That the 'S.S.' include reviews of films, books, plays and radio programmes that are of special interest to socialists." Carried 65-11.
- Resolution - Fulham "That the 'S.S.' adopt a general policy of reprinting articles of scientific value from other journals and printing articles from non-Party contributors." Lost 26-53.
- Resolution - Fulham "That the Education Committee allotted four pages in each issue of the 'S.S.' for educational matter." Lost 9-72.
- Resolution - Fulham "That the 'S.S.' be increased in size to twenty-four pages and its price raised to 6d." Lost 6-76.
- Resolution - Fulham "That a Sales Organisation of six members (drawn from the Editorial Committee) be set up to boost the sale of the 'S.S.' through newsagents, etc." Lost 17-61.

Discussion. Fulham Branch stated that the reasons for which they moved their resolutions had already been circulated to branches and they only wished to add that they had no objections to the personnel of the present Editorial Committee but that a committee of twelve would rule out the possibility of a small committee becoming a clique; the main reason for suggesting twelve members was that this number was required to make workable other resolutions standing in their Branch's name.

Paddington said that it was the Party who determined the policy of the 'S.S.' not the Editorial Committee; twelve members on the committee would not be a workable number; in their opinion in order to improve the 'S.S.' it was necessary to have more and better writers.

Glasgow considered that twelve would be an extremely unwieldy number and that such a committee would be exceedingly difficult to convene.

Edgware thought that the Editorial Committee's task was simply to edit, and they should be relieved of other work.

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Leyton said that if there were six members on the Editorial Committee it would have a wider view, but twelve members would be too unwieldy. A member of the Editorial Committee said that if the resolutions were passed they might in fact prove impossible to carry out, and whether they were passed or not it would not deal with the real problem which was a question of shortage of writers and a regular supply of suitable articles; if more material from the Education Committee was wanted in the 'S.S.' there was no reason why this should not be published if the Education Committee provided the material, except that this had been done in the past, when syllabuses, etc., had been published, but protests had been made that these were not proper material for the 'S.S.'; in any case we should not give information to opponents through the columns of the 'S.S.'. What objections were there to the Cover Designs Committee? It would not make them a better committee simply by merging them with the Editorial Committee; they did a good job as it was. Enlargement of committees could not lead to the writing of more and better articles, pamphlets, and so on as this work could only be done by individuals. Regarding the size of the Committee he asked how it would be possible to organise meetings of six or twelve members; meetings of the Editorial Committee had to be convened at short notice and irregular intervals e.g. owing to the irregular receipt of articles, date of going to press. Articles were circulated among the members of the Committee for individual criticism and if the Committee was enlarged some of its members would not always turn up to the meetings with the result that articles would go astray or not be on hand when required. The size of the Editorial Committee should be kept at a minimum and a larger number would be completely unworkable. There should not be too many members on committees unnecessarily and we should not have too many unnecessary committees. Articles could not be read or criticised in committee but in the members' own time, they then discussed their ideas in committee but the bigger the committee the less able would they be to do this. A committee of even six would inevitably become a committee of three. If we changed to a larger committee and any smaller sub-committees were instructed to prepare articles on specific points then the question of whether or not the desired article was written would still depend on the writer concerned. Large or small committees cannot make members write to order. What was wanted was a nucleus of writers experienced and capable of writing suitable articles

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on specific subjects at short notice. Before the last war we had about 15 writers who could be relied upon to produce articles as required. Although we had a larger number of writers for the "S.S." at the present time they were newer and less experienced, less knowledgeable and less dependable. The whole solution to the question of improving the "S.S." lay in obtaining a pool of more experienced and more dependable writers able to produce more and better articles.

Another member of the Editorial Committee said that the present committee was not a clique. The only standard used to judge articles was did they correctly state the Party's policy, were they correct, and were they decently written; articles were not rejected from any other point of view. Some years ago it was decided that the E.C. should choose the leading article each month but this could only be done twice as writers could not do as the E.C. requested. Today the Editorial Committee have to write a large part of the "S.S." at the last minute with the consequence that articles hastily written are not the best type of material. Would be writers must learn to write properly for the Party as they had to learn to do other Party work.

Dartford supported the resolutions because at present the Editorial Committee's time was taken up in writing when they should be simply editing. A section of a larger committee should keep in touch with writers and devote time to assisting and training them.

Unsuitable articles were sent back to writers with comments, but the Editorial Committee should discuss faults and criticisms more with writers. A larger committee would spread the load over more shoulders. A member of the Editorial Committee stated that rejected articles were returned frequently with long explanations, criticisms and suggestions.

West Ham claimed that the "S.S." fell between two stools; articles on the one hand were simple popular stuff, and on the other hand technical matter for members but unsuitable for non-members.

Marylebone said they had heard no real criticism of the contents, policy, etc., of the "S.S.", but if there was anything wrong with it it was not the fault of the Editorial Committee. Criticism of the "S.S." was a criticism by members of the Party of themselves.

Bradford thought that the most valuable suggestion contained in the resolutions was that the "S.S." distribution should be put on a proper commercial basis. Bloomsbury said that the cause was that suitable articles were not forthcoming from members. It did not follow that more articles would emanate from a larger

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committee. Methods of training writers were already available if members wished to use them. An E.C. member stated that a writers committee should be formed to produce articles as required; such a committee would be able to consider and discuss any articles returned to them by the Editorial committee. Fulham said that the number of resolutions on the agenda were an indication of the concern of the membership with our written propaganda. They thought that the concentration of the Party membership in London was a reflection of the inadequacy of our written propaganda. Ealing said that sub-editing was not a practical proposition for the "S.S." as it was for the daily newspapers; the Party should discuss a paid Editorial Committee - this might improve the "S.S." if the funds were available. Birmingham were not opposed to seeing more book reviews, etc., in the "S.S.", but they would like to see articles of a more technical nature and, at the same time, an even balance maintained. An E.C. member said that the state of the "S.S." was the most urgent question in the Party at the present time. He thought the "S.S." contained very poor quality material on the whole, and was largely read only by Party members and sympathisers. We should aim at producing a weekly newspaper on the lines of the Election Special, and leave the "S.S." as a technical journal. Another E.C. member said that many articles were useless and showed a lamentable lack of understanding.

Resolution - Bloomsbury "That this conference recommends the Executive Committee to make yet another attempt to form a Central Circulating Committee." Carried 70-8.

Resolution - S.W.London "That this conference instructs the Executive Committee to investigate the possibility of setting up machinery for dealing adequately with the sale of Party literature at all indoor meetings including debates of the Party and other organisations." Carried 55-16.

Resolution - Kingston "That a pamphlets committee be appointed to undertake all work connected with the publication of leaflets and pamphlets, thus leaving the existing Editorial Committee to deal only with the 'Socialist Standard'." Carried 43-30.

Discussion. A member of the Editorial Committee wanted to know whether this resolution meant a committee to write pamphlets; if so, why were these members not writing pamphlets now? Kingston said that they thought that such a committee

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would relieve the Editorial Committee of a lot of work. A member of the Editorial Committee stated that they had had several pamphlets submitted to them during the past few years; of these only six which had been written by the Editorial Committee had been finished, approved, and published.

Resolution - Camberwell "That the Editorial Committee allot a column or space in each issue of the 'Socialist Standard' to matters relating to the Trade Union Movement."

Lost 20-57.

Discussion. Camberwell opened by saying that they had heard complaints that there appeared to be no connection between the policy of the Party and the industrial section of the working class. Trade Union topics would assist branches in industrial areas to sell the "S.S." A member of the Editorial Committee informed the Conference that during 1949 there were seven articles and several odd paragraphs, etc., dealing with Trade Unions. Bloomsbury said that when possible articles were printed in the "S.S."; the real difficulty was the collecting of suitable and accurate information regarding Trade Union activity. Glasgow stated that unless we could ensure there were members capable of dealing with particular issues each month the resolution was simply a pious one. Ealing thought that if we could publish statistics, etc., as ammunition for Trade Unionists in the "S.S." it would be a great help to them.

Resolution - Leyton "That this conference instructs the Executive Committee to maintain the price of the "S.S." at 3d and to raise the price to branches to 2/9d. per dozen."

Lost 15-65.

Discussion. Leyton stated that this method reduced the loss at Head Office, and spread it over all the branches. Paddington said that all these various ways of ironing out financial difficulties did not make any difference to the Party as a whole.

Resolution - Edgware "That this conference instructs that a pamphlet be produced if possible reviewing the last five years of Labour Government from the Socialist viewpoint as soon as possible."

Carried 57-27.

Resolution - Edgware "That this conference recommends the E.C. to examine the possibilities of producing a weekly newspaper in addition to the "S.S." and report back to the next Delegate Meeting."

Carried 37-26.

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Discussion. Edgware said that a weekly newspaper should deal with topical issues, the "S.S." being a monthly journal could not do so. Party literature was an accessory to propaganda meetings, but the "S.S." was not popular as was demonstrated by the low circulation. The circulation of a weekly would pay for itself, and the existence of such an organ would encourage writers to write on topical issues.

Paddington said that whilst the "S.S." was not as good as they would like, nevertheless it was extremely useful to propagandists.

The General Secretary opposed the resolution stating that we could not at this stage deal properly with the question of a weekly newspaper in addition to the "S.S.", to do so would require some paid staff plus a re-organisation of our distributing system; we needed a financial assessment of the Party's present main requirements and the E.C. should prepare a report along these lines; the cost involved would be thousands of pounds for which an appeal could then be launched.

A non-delegate said that the sale of the "S.S." was small because the party was small, and the party was small because our ideas were not sufficiently popular. To produce a weekly we must have sufficient writers. The Party was still primarily an educational body not a political body. Bloomsbury said that the Party members must have more education and have more and better writers.

An E.C. member stated that everybody approved the idea of a weekly. The "S.S." would never be a newspaper; political monthlies had died with the 19th century and the Party should work to the end of publishing a weekly. This would involve many difficulties but it was a good thing to have short term objectives for members to strive to fulfil.

Resolution - S.W.London "That his conference recommends the Executive Committee to investigate the advisability of producing the "S.S." fortnightly with either 12 pages at the price of 3d. or 8 pages at the price of 2d."

Amendment - Bloomsbury "That this conference recommends the Executive Committee to investigate the possibility of producing a fortnightly "S.S." and to place a full report before the delegates at the 1950 Delegate Meeting."

Carried 33-9.
As.Sub.Res.Agreed.

Discussion. S.W.London stated that the same number of "S.S." would be sold every fortnight as every month and if it were a smaller size would avoid the loss at present falling on Head Office. If the shortage of writers continued we

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could produce an 8 page copy which would not need any more writers than the present "S.S." A member of the Editorial Committee said that this question had been gone into before. One of the chief difficulties was the problem of distribution particularly within the branches themselves.

Bloomsbury said that the time was approaching when we could do these things and the E.C. should look into the matter very fully.

Beling thought that the Party's resources did not warrant such an investigation; the Party was already committed to too many other things.

Resolution - Paddington "That this conference recommends that no increase be made in the price of the 'S.S.' "

Resolution - Birmingham and Camberwell "Next business." Agreed.

Resolution - Paddington "That this conference recommends the Executive Committee to investigate the possibility of increasing the size of the 'S.S.' with the price remaining the same as at present." Lost 4-17.

Resolution - Paddington "That this conference recommends that a Sales Organisation of six members be set up to boost the sale of the 'S.S.' through newsagents, etc.

Carried 14-10

Resolution - Paddington "That this conference recommends that branches be encouraged to distribute in their districts old copies of the 'S.S.' as specimens free of charge, together with a printed circular advertising the 'S.S.' with details of where further copies can be obtained."

Lost 9-13.

Resolution - Paddington "That this conference recommends that the 'S.S.' occasionally reprint articles of scientific or other value from other journals and print articles from non-party members."

Lost 15-21.

Resolution - Southend "That this conference recommends the Executive Committee to investigate the possibility of photographs, diagrams, and cartoons appearing in the 'S.S.'."

Carried 15-7.

Resolution - Kelvingrove "That this conference recommends to branches of the Party that each branch sets up a writers committee to ensure that the Editorial Committee receive at least one article per month and that the Editorial Committee inform branches of the types of articles and

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article
Discussion

General Sec

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length required and stress the need for more and better articles."
Carried 29-0.

Discussion. Kelvingrove considered that the method outlined would produce more articles for the Editorial Committee to consider and in time would produce better articles. A member of the Editorial Committee thought that it might prove a fruitful idea. List of suitable subjects had already been circulated to branches but this could be done again.

Item for Discussion - S.W.London "The advisability of including a monthly book review in the 'S.S.' which will stimulate interest in books, past and present, for the benefit of new members and readers."

Item for Discussion - S.W.London "The advisability of reducing the size of the 'S.S.' to octavo."

Discussion. Southend did not consider that the "S.S." would sell so well if it were reduced to octavo size. A member of the Cover Designs Committee thought that it would be a mistake to reduce the "S.S." to the size of a pamphlet; especially in view of the opinions expressed in favour of making the Party organ more like a newspaper. Bradford stated that a change in size would upset the arrangements for binding the "S.S." in uniform volumes.

Resolution - Woolwich and Palmers Green "Next business."

Agreed.

Item for Discussion - "Improved methods of selling 'S.S.' and Party literature."

Discussion. Croydon branch said that they had adopted contents bills or placards for advertising the "S.S." similar to those used by the evening newspapers; at debates and indoor meetings they produced their own posters advertising pamphlets; such work a job for each branch to do itself; a good idea was to have a portable literature stall to display all the Party literature. Fulham thought that in order to get the "S.S." fully publicised in newsagents, etc., all members should buy their copies through this channel. A member of the Literature Committee stated that although the publicity gained by this method might be desirable it meant a further financial loss which would fall on Head Office. West Ham said that they had found that canvassing was an extremely good method of selling Party literature. A member of the Literature Committee said that the only way to increase sales was for every individual member to

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increase his efforts; it had been done in certain branches and if more effort was made he was of the opinion that the circulation of the "S.S." would quickly double.

Leyton had appointed a member of the branch to keep in contact with ex-members and sympathisers; the use of a follow-up system had increased the sale of the "S.S." and interest in branch activities generally.

St. Pancras endorsed the advantages of canvassing and a portable literature stall. Ordering the "S.S." through newsagents would at least lead to it being displayed, and the financial loss might only be temporary in which case it would be worth while.

Bradford said that ordering through newsagents was an excellent idea. Members should guarantee to take six or more copies provided the newsagent displayed the "S.S." Newsagents could be supplied with posters.

Baling stated that they had found that canvassing had to be continuous and extended otherwise sales dropped; when an area had been canvassed and a number of regular readers obtained a smaller number of canvassers could deal with that area, whilst other members tackle new areas.

Birmingham said that there was no guarantee that newsagents would display the "S.S."

The General Secretary considered that there had been more individual effort in the early days of the Party. The first printing of the "S.S." was 3,000 copies of which the sales were 2,625; Party members would have to make a bigger effort, newsagents would not solve the problem for us.

Paddington said that speakers were in the best position to sell literature; unfortunately some did not try and they thought that all speakers should try to sell as much as possible; most speakers left the advertising of literature until the close of the meeting when the audience began to disperse - this was a mistake.

The Central Organiser said that there was ample scope to distribute the "S.S." inside the Party by the various means stated by other delegates.

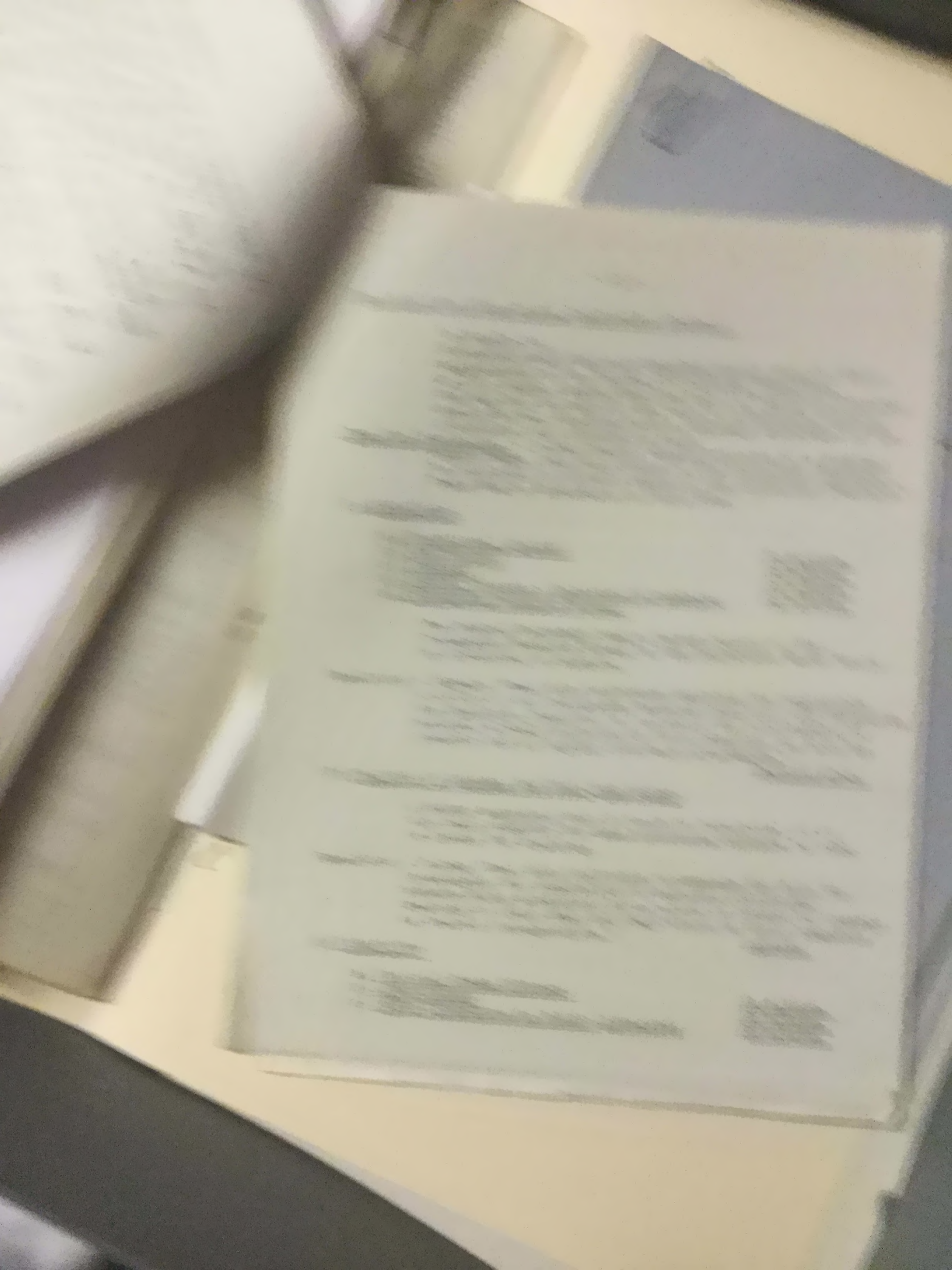
Manchester said that they had found canvassing was a better method of selling the "S.S." than through their propaganda meetings.

An E.C. member suggested that a list of hints on selling the "S.S." should be drawn up, and circulated.

Another E.C. member thought that the "S.S." could be sold at busy stations in conjunction with the exhibition of a suitably attractive poster; poster drives were a good idea at weekly intervals provided they were large, comprising 50 to 100 members; sales of Party literature depended on the interest created; when the circulation of the "S.S." is large, newsagents will be only too willing

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to handle
Birmingham
suggested
At

General



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(d) Publicity in Trade Unions.

Resolution - Oroydon "That this conference recommends that the Publicity Committee prepare a series of propaganda circulars outlining the Party's case on specific subjects, i.e. Wages, Working conditions and Negotiating Machinery, etc., for circulation to T.U. Branches in collaboration with Branches of the Party." Lost 39-39.

(9) FINANCE:

No action.

(10) ELECTORAL ACTIVITY:

(a) Examination of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates.

Resolution- Bloomsbury (Lubent and Devereux) "That this conference recommends that the examination of prospective parliamentary candidates be by a committee elected by the E.C. and that the examination take place other than at the E.C." Agreed.

Discussion: Bloomsbury said that the present procedure had caused the E.C. to defer a considerable amount of business on nights when examinations were taking place; they also considered that the examinations were too short and were an inadequate test.

Amendments to Rules:

ELECTORAL ACTION.

Bloomsbury Branch:

New Rule 27a "Branches wishing to contest elections, National or Local, shall do so only with the consent of a Conference or Delegate Meeting." Lost 16-63.

Addendum - Hackney Branch;

"or a special delegate meeting summoned for that purpose." Lost 20-58.

St. Pancras Branch:

New Rule 27a "Any Branch proposing to contest elections National or Local shall first obtain permission from the Executive Committee." Carried 51-30.

Addendum - St. Pancras Branch:

"or a Delegate Meeting, or a Conference." Lost 28-52.

Resolution - Leyton Branch "That this conference instructs the Executive Committee to contest any By-election occurring in the London area during the next government, subject

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- to financial resources and the existence of sufficient members to sign a nomination paper in the constituency."
- Amendment - St. Pancras Branch "That the question of contesting By-elections during the next government be left to the discretion of the E.C." Carried 42-34.
- Amendment - Lewisham Branch "Delete 'during the next government'." Lost 24-45.
- Resolution - St. Pancras (McGregor and LaTouche) "That in the event of the next General Election occurring between May and September 1950 this conference recommends that the E.C. contest at least one constituency."
- Amendment - West Ham (Scott and McNish) "To delete 'one' and insert 'two'." Carried 28-22.
As Sub.res. 46-16.
- Amendment-Bloomsbury (Devereux and Lawrence) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to make every effort to increase the number of constituencies contested at the next election, providing that such election is not held before June 1950." Lost 29-29.
- Discussion. St. Pancras opened by saying that the period May to September in their resolution was most important as the bad weather in the last election in February had seriously hampered the Party's activity. With better weather the Party could contest at least one constituency and engage in more outdoor propaganda. For the same reasons they were opposed to contesting elections after September during the winter.
- Paddington supported the resolution but opposed the St. Pancras views as they did not think the winter was a close season. Indoor propaganda had proved excellent in the February election. In any case propaganda was not the sole reason for contesting elections - electoral activity was part of the job of the Party.
- West Ham supported the resolution but said it would be good policy to contest the same constituencies as in the February election. The cost of the last election was unduly high but economies could be made. Although there were other demands on Party finances these were not too pressing at the moment. More activity should be concentrated on canvassing and propaganda. Money was well spent in electoral activity.
- Bloomsbury said there was no case for reducing the number of candidates, except financial considerations. It would be pathetic were we now to reduce the number of candidates. They accepted the Parliamentary Committee's view that we should not contest an election before June 1950, but if it was decided that we should do so then we should be sure that we are as effective as possible; we should have at

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least two candidates but Conference should recommend the E.C. to increase this number if possible; it was foolish to let other considerations such as finance and the weather sway the issue; we should at least repeat our past efforts.

A member of the Parliamentary Committee reminded the conference that the Report did not recommend going back to running one candidate only; it was considered that the minimum expenditure for each seat contested would be £475, and at least two candidates would cost nearly £1,000; that it was wiser to contest only two seats at the next election and to build up the Party resources in order to contest three or four seats at the following election. Ealing did not think that the financial resources of the Party were sufficient at the present time, and that funds would be better used in ordinary propaganda activities. An E.C. member said that there had been noticeable changes in the attitude of the workers at our meetings during the last election; workers were less concerned with how we differed from the Labour Party and such questions but, instead, were more concerned with Socialism and what it would be like. This was an encouraging sign. We should fight as many constituencies as possible and the E.C. should be given a free hand to decide the number; it should be accepted that we were an election-fighting Party, and Conference should launch an election-fighting Fund. The General Secretary thought that the question of the number of constituencies should be left for the E.C. to decide upon and that when a decision was reached we should make every effort to collect the required funds to enable the project to be successful; that members and sympathisers were more prepared to make donations and help the Party in other ways when there was a specific job to be done. Another Paddington Delegate considered that if there was an election in the next few months we might have the money but in other ways lack the resources to run a more full campaign; therefore if the election was early we should run only two candidates; if the Bloomsbury amendment meant that no candidates would run if an election took place before June 1950 Paddington Branch would oppose the amendment.

St. Pancras pointed out that their resolution, as amended, said at least two candidates, and that it did not necessarily mean only two.

Bloomsbury Branch thought that we should not tie the hands of the E.C.; there was a good case to justify staying out of an election before June 1950; the function of conference was not to examine these questions in detail but to lay down the broad policy; to lay down that at least one or two candidates should go forward might be construed by the E.C.

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as a limit on the number of candidates.

An E.C. member considered it would have been far better to have had a much wider resolution under discussion to decide the general question for or against electoral activity in general; he agreed with electoral activity but he thought that such a discussion would persuade some members who opposed such activity to support it in future.

Bloomsbury wound-up on their amendment saying that it simply restricted the Party for only the next two months until June 1950; they were prepared to take the Parliamentary Committee's advice; their amendment expressed the view that if we could go forward with increased activity we should do so.

West Ham winding-up the resolution, and in answer to questions, stated that their resolution meant "at least two" candidates.

Resolution - Paddington (Millen and Walters) "That this conference recommends that if a general election takes place before Conference, 1951, then North Paddington and East Ham South be contested." Carried 40-16.

Discussion. Paddington said that if only two constituencies were contested it was best that these should be East Ham South and North Paddington because of the work already done in those areas; the voting at the election had proved that there was no difference between constituencies; these two constituencies being in different parts of London made it easier to spread members' activity.

Bloomsbury said that they considered East Ham South was suitable and that regarding Paddington North the fall in votes since 1945 might suggest that support for us was lessening; they did not think that the branch had put in sufficient activity between elections.

A member of the Parliamentary Committee said that it was not good policy to drop North Paddington; the Party was now known there, and the size of the constituency made it convenient; it was not good to throw away the groundwork that had been put in.

Another Paddington delegate said that they had heard various objections, but anywhere where there was a mass of workers, that area was receptive to Socialist propaganda; the Branch had put in as much effort between elections as any normal branch, but they considered that an election campaign is a Party effort and not just a branch effort; North Paddington should be contested as we were likely to get more publicity as we were already known.

Camberwell said that the past effort in North Paddington had not been rewarded.

An E.C. member stated that he thought that many members

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present knew little about either constituency; he thought that the reduction in the number of votes was the reason for the opposition to North Paddington; it was possible that we should get less votes in East Ham South next time; Paddington members had canvassed one-third of the constituency before the election; the indoor meetings had been better than anywhere else; he did not think there was anything to choose between most constituencies.

Croydon considered that action in these two constituencies was justified in view of the work put in.

Hackney did not think that the pessimism expressed at the reduction in votes was opportunistic; there was no virtue in small votes; a thorough review of constituencies should be taken and branches consulted more closely and in particular the strength and state of the branches in the constituencies to be fought should be taken more into account.

Manchester claimed that the Publicity obtained, by the few notices in the papers and on the wireless was not of much use to the Party as a whole and considered that it passed unnoticed in the Provinces; more assistance should be given by London to the Provinces instead of concentrating on fighting elections in London; all the effort spent in London does not help the provincial branches.

Kingston thought that the question of the constituencies should be left to the E.C. who should not be tied down by conference on this matter; we should not confine ourselves to remaining in one constituency but should go farther afield to new areas and let the branch carry on continuing the work started during the election period.

Paddington wound-up saying that it was no argument against North Paddington that there had been a drop in the votes cast; we normally go on building up propaganda stations, and if we left North Paddington it would seem that we had given it up as hopeless; the Branch had not neglected work between the elections.

Resolution - Paddington (Millen and Walters) "That this conference endorses the attitude of the E.C. in opposing the publication of photographs of the candidates."

Paddington said that the candidate simply has to be put forward because of the electoral system in this country. No undue prominence should be given to the individual.

Resolution - Bloomsbury (Lawrence) and Hackney (Wilmot) "Next business."
Agreed.

Resolution - Paddington (Millen and Cudmore) "That this conference considers that undue prominence was given to the Party's candidate in East Ham South and in future elections such actions be avoided."

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Resolution - St. Pancras (LaTouche) and Fulham (Roseneil) "Next business."
Carried 33-25.

Resolution - Southend (Grisley and Cottis) "That this conference is of the opinion that the putting forward of prospective Parliamentary Candidates by branches and their subsequent withdrawal where there is insufficient local financial support is good policy due to the wide publicity thereby obtained."
Lost 7-36.

Discussion. Southend claimed that the Party was now known in Southend East because they had put up a prospective parliamentary candidate. They had also had a four thousand word statement of the Party case printed in a local paper. Opportunities such as these should be seized with both hands. People had become interested in Socialism and the Party as a result of their activity.

The General Secretary said that the deliberate withdrawals of prospective parliamentary candidates was bad policy; we did this years ago because of lack of support but now that we put forward candidates intending to nominate them it would discredit the Party to put up prospective candidates knowing that they would be withdrawn; that such activity would also have a depressing effect on members, and dampen their enthusiasm.

Kingston claimed that the Party had not grown out of any means of putting the case for Socialism the putting up of prospective parliamentary candidates was not indulging in a sham battle as we always hoped that support would come forward to enable them to be nominated; it was a question of propagating the Socialist case and we should seek every avenue to this end.

Birmingham supported the resolution as they thought that a prospective parliamentary candidate formed a focal point for propaganda in the area of the branch who put him forward. Baling considered that such branch campaigns were not warranted as parliamentary activity was run by and the responsibility of the Party as a whole.

Bloomsbury said that if we got the general public into the habit of thinking that we put up candidates only to withdraw them, it did more harm than good, and they would lose confidence in the Party rather than gain it.

Edgware stated that the Party always claims to put forward an honest and straightforward case to the working-class. To put forward parliamentary candidates knowing beforehand that they would be withdrawn was a dishonest attitude. In any case the real election campaign only starts after nomination day.

Croydon supported the resolution saying that it was honest to say that we were going to put a candidate in the field

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provided we made it clear that if sufficient financial support was not forthcoming, we could not go forward to nomination.

Another Bloomsbury delegate pointed out that conference had already given permission to the E.C. to put forward at least two candidates; we had now entered the political field seriously and putting forward only prospective parliamentary candidates would discredit the entire serious effort; we should do one thing or the other; to put forward candidate due to be withdrawn before nomination day would give the Party only bad publicity.

Southend wound-up saying that there were other branches where a better effort could be made than Southend, and they thought their own campaign had been well worth while.

(11) ORGANISATIONS ABROAD.

(a) Companion Parties:

(i) W.S.P. of U.S. An extract was read from a recent letter received from the W.S.P. of U.S. stating that the referenda ballot held by them on the proposed amendments to the Declaration of Principles had resulted in the amendments being rejected. They sent a reasoned case for the proposed amendments for the information of the Party.

Resolution - Southend (Grisley and Andrews) "That this conference recommends that the letter from the W.S.P. of U.S. giving the reasons for the proposed alterations to the Declarations of Principles be circulated to the membership."
Agreed.

No action was taken on the remainder of this item.

An extract from a letter from J.O.Boucher (S. Africa) was read in which he suggested that the question of the Party preparing history of the Party and its companion parties might be taken as an item for discussion.

Resolution - Bloomsbury (Lawrence) and Hackney (James) "That this conference recommends the E.C. to examine and report upon the suggestions."
Agreed.

Messages of Greeting were read from S.P. of Ireland, W.S.P. of U.S., S.P. of New Zealand, and J.Boucher (S. Africa). Greetings were expressed to the conference on behalf of sympathisers in Austria, Germany, Nigeria, and Sweden. Comrades Fahy, Kane, and Cullen of the S.P. of Ireland briefly addressed the conference.

Resolution - Kingston (Waters) and Paddington (Millon) "That greetings be sent from this conference to Companion Parties and ex-members overseas, and thanks to Wellington comrades for their gift."
Agreed.

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ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION.

Resolution - Manchester Branch "That the item for discussion 'Socialism and Marxism' deferred by the 45th Annual Conference and by the Autumn Delegate Meeting following, be taken by the 46th Annual Conference as the 1st item for discussion."

Lost 35-38.

Amendment - Fulham "Delete all after 'as' and insert 'soon as possible during the time allotted for Items for Discussion'."

Lost 37-45.

Item for discussion - Hackney "That the principle of questioning applicants for membership of the Party be reviewed."

Discussion. Hackney claimed that the practice of testing applicants for membership had outlived its usefulness; such examinations did not appear to keep out people who were not socialists; it was easy for people to acquire a superficial knowledge of the Party case and questions likely to be asked and have ready answers for them; it should be left for members to gain knowledge after entrance to the Party; the thought of taking examinations frightened away applicants.

Ealing Branch stated that examinations of applicants should not be too harsh but should be more in the form of a discussion.

Palmer's Green were opposed to any review; they said that the examination of applicants had kept the Party strong and should be retained until socialism is established; applicants did not have to be capable of answering any and every question put to them, but we must make sure before admitting any member that he had a sound knowledge of the essentials.

Item for discussion - Manchester "Is it desirable that Delegates voting at a Conference, quote and have recorded, the exact number of votes cast 'for' and 'against' at the Branch meeting.

Resolution - Manchester (Marsden and Hopgood) "That this conference recommends that the present system of voting at Conference be revised, so that delegates record the exact number of votes cast 'for' or 'against' at the branch meeting and the total of these votes be taken at Conference in order to determine the final result."

Lost by a large majority.

Item for discussion - Camberwell "The need for the formulation of a positive policy, by the Party, towards the Trade Union movement, and its membership."

Camberwell said that the Party which had an attitude of support to the Trade Union movement should also have a policy; the Trade Union movement was part of the class struggle and we must our case across to the organised section of the working-class; speakers were sent to trade

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unions in a most haphazard fashion; every effort should be made to address trade union meetings as discussion at these was on a higher plane than at out-door meetings.

Edwards said that we wanted more definite suggestions; we had a policy toward the Trade Union movement, and this was explained through the columns of the "S.S."; although we did not address enough trade union branches, we did send speakers at every opportunity.

Croydon said that we do explain to trade unionists their position as trade unionists on all possible occasions and this was a very valuable part of our propaganda.

St. Pancras questioned whether the workers organised in trade unions were necessarily more receptive to socialist propaganda.

An E.C. member stated that our attitude to the trade union movement was one of support, and to formulate a policy towards the Trade Union movement would be to formulate a line of conduct in order to enforce our attitude; a policy, although an incorrect one, would be e.g. to donate funds to trade unions, to send speakers to speak for trade unions, to provide writers, etc; the Party could only deal with the Trade Union movement on general lines as a party, although members' individual knowledge as socialists could help them in their trade union activity; the Party could not take part in internal disputes in the Trade Union movement, as it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to gain accurate information and even members of the Party in some trade unions had different views regarding the internal workings of their trade unions; this was not a question of principle but simply a question of expediency; whilst the Party could go into details regarding certain trade unions, their activities, strikes, etc. but to do this would only bring about dissension.

Item for discussion - Lewisham "The advisability of Branches holding more funds than are essential for their immediate needs."
Resolution - Bloomsbury (Young and Devereux) "That this conference deprecates the holding of large balances in branch funds."

Carried 50-11.

Lewisham said they could not understand the attitude of those branches holding large funds and perhaps those branches would give Conference some information.

Baling stated that it used to be their custom to make large donations to Head Office but found, at one time, that after making a large donation they required more money than they have retained; since then they have retained more in their funds.

The General Secretary said that the E.C. were powerless to deal with the matter, but thought that some branches were holding too much.

Hackney said that they were looking forward to a future

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time when money was not so plentiful; in order to carry on, and extend their activities they considered it necessary to hold a large reserve.

An E.C. member said that if branches were in need of funds, the E.C. would always give them a grant, and that it was in line with the democratic decisions made by the Party for branches to donate funds to Head Office so that these decisions could be fulfilled.

The Central Organiser said that the main source of Head Office income was the branches and if they continued to with-hold donations Head Office funds would decrease; Head Office funds were available for the use of branches and branch funds should be available for Head Office use.

Item for discussion - Ealing "That the question of new Head Office premises be discussed."

Resolution - Bloomsbury (Laurence and H.Young) "That this conference endorses the suggestions of the New Premises Committee viz. that we remain at the present premises for as long as possible and that meanwhile every effort be made to obtain more suitable accommodation either by purchase or rental."

Agreed.

Item for discussion - West Ham "The right of the E.C. to place resolutions or amendments on the Final Agenda."

Resolution - West Ham (Scott and J.Kerr) "That this conference informs the Executive Committee that the Executive Committee is precluded by Rule 23 from placing resolutions, amendments, and items for discussion on the Conference Agenda."

Lost 23-32.

Discussion. West Ham Branch asked the delegates to consider whether or not under Rule 23 resolutions etc., could be accepted from branches only; they considered that it did preclude the E.C., or anybody else, from putting resolutions on the Final Agenda.

Bloomsbury pointed out that this matter had been placed on the Final Agenda in the past and the idea that the E.C. were precluded from placing resolutions on the Agenda had been rejected by the instructed votes from branches; there were adequate safe-guards in the Party organisation to prevent the E.C. taking advantage of the situation.

Item for discussion - Edgware "The re-naming the Party to the 'World Socialist Party'."

Discussion. Edgware claimed that the present name sounds nationalistic whereas we are an international organisation; also we were too easily confused with the Labour Party. Camberwell thought it deplorable that this should be discussed; the name 'World Socialist Party of Gt. Britain' would be a contradiction in terms.

An E.C. member said that we might be today confused in name

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with the Labour Party - was it not possible that if we changed to 'W.S.P.' we should just as easily be confused with the Communist W.F.T.U ?

Resolution - West Ham "Next business."

Agreed.

Item for discussion - Paddington "Socialism and Marxism."

Item for discussion - S.W.London "Are the workers robbed and of what"

Item for discussion - Ealing "What Socialism will be like."

It was agreed that the three items should be discussed together.

Discussion. Paddington thought that perhaps the attitude of the Party to Marx and Marxism had changed; ten years ago, and before arguments were centred around the writings of Marx, but things had changed since those days and the Party no longer argues the details of Marxism; that the stress placed on Marxism is now much less; we now agree that Marx was wrong in certain of his writings and we should therefore discuss whether we are a Marxist Party. St.Pancras raised the question of new ideas that had arisen e.g. psychology and whether we could apply a socialist analysis to the development of these ideas since the time of Marx, and what influence they had on Marxist or Socialist theory.

Bloomsbury said that there were now scientific trends arising from these new developments but they were still immature and therefore many divergent opinions were expressed; many scientific subjects were not directly connected with the socialist case.

An E.C. member said that although all knowledge is useful, the time of propagandists is limited; in the past the Party used to draw examples from such subjects as were contained in the polemics of Marx and Engels with contemporary critics but now, workers generally wanted to know more about our case and socialism; although these polemics were important the general propaganda tendency of the Party should meet the changing interest of the workers which was settling on our case, in relation to the system we are urging them to inaugurate; there were many wrong conceptions of what socialism would be like e.g., the idea that capitalist methods of production would be carried over to socialism; many members were wrong, regarding the question of what socialism would be like, because they did not understand the mechanics of capitalist economics and production.

Glasgow stated that the main case of Marx and Engels is fundamentally unassailable; capitalist critics cannot upset the fundamental points for example, the labour theory of value, the materialist conception of history; the problems of the working-class today are no different and the

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developing sciences have in no way shown Marx and Engels to be wrong.

Another E.C. member said that as a socialist he was interested in methods by which he could convince the workers; in his view psychology was not a science - those who claimed to be psychologists are in conflict and confusion themselves. A more fruitful discussion would have been the best method for putting the case for socialism.

Resolution - Bloomsbury and St. Pancras "That the report of the Executive Committee be adopted." Agreed.

_____ Gen. Sec.

Note: The Conference agreed to the General Secretary's suggestion that the Standing Orders Committee should consider a change in the method of taking instructed votes by getting branches to send in voting details before the commencement of Conference, and the placing of an amendment to rules, if necessary, on the Agenda of the next Conference.

Conference Sessions:-

First day - 11.20 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Second day - 11.20 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Third day - 11.15 a.m. to 6.30 pm.

Standing Orders:-

	<u>Delegates present.</u>	<u>Branches represented.</u>
<u>First day.</u>	72	26
Kelvingrove delegates, and Comrade Hicks (W.Ham) were permitted to sit without credentials.		
<u>Second day.</u>	70	26
E. Smith (Fulham) was permitted to sit without credentials.		
<u>Third day.</u>	70	26

Eccles and Newport branches were not represented.

Financial Summary.

Collections, canteen, Dance etc.

Total Receipts.

£96. 8. 0.

Total Payments.

£72. 0. 6.

Balance to Party Funds.

£24. 7. 6.